

DAVIS, D. L.



# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE · NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021

THE PRESIDENT

June 28, 1978

Dr. Devra Lee Davis  
Science Advisory Board  
Office of the Deputy Assistant Administrator  
for Testing and Evaluation  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, S.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20460

Dear Dr. Davis:

I am very glad that you were able to give me the copy of your testimony with respect to personnel requirements needed for the implementation of recent environmental legislation. I had asked Dr. Rall for precisely this information some little while ago but it was not available at this time and your material is right on line. I suspect it may even underestimate the requirements for the infrastructure of research that you allude to in the "forcing of basic science" on page 2. In this respect certainly our views could not be more convergent.

I do have just some comments: it is one thing to talk about "forcing basic science"; another to see where the resources to allow that to happen are going to come from. Second, it seems to me terribly important not to overlook the policy-analysis framework in which this toxicology has to be done. At the very least the training of the people who will occupy the front lines should include a rather broader perspective than experimental work on biological specimens. I am not sure that I can identify many existing institutions whose training has the requisite depth and there will certainly be significant additional staffing requirements for that purpose.

My efforts to put together such an interdisciplinary program at Stanford were quite unavailing in the light of the undeviating focus of a medical school on issues connected with health care and therapeutics. It would gratify me

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very much to renew that effort at The Rockefeller University but resources are again very much in question and I am not much more optimistic here in the present climate. However, it is certainly useful in many ways to be in touch with the thinking of people in government who can perhaps more credibly articulate the underlying motive for this demand.

I am afraid, from some of your other remarks, that I was trying to cover too much ground in a rather short time; and that many of my statements must not have been clear; to the point where they were interpreted as almost the opposite of what I was trying to say. I am afraid that I may have let my own enthusiasm for the subject carry me away, without sufficient regard for the circumstances and tolerance of my audience.

I assume that it was quite transparent that the person who had received that pink sheet that I was quoting was myself. Having had an almost identical experience in 1965, when I was trying to arouse some interest in basic studies on chlorination, I really have begun to despair about the possibility of bringing in an open-minded basic science orientation to environmental health studies of this kind. But I am confident that there will be some eventual recognition of the importance of studying the chemistry of materials like carbon; more so if they will be put into widespread circulation even at the insistence of environmental health authorities.

As I promised you, I will be preparing a written submission on the question of the draft regulations for the use of activated carbon and will remember to send you a copy. I am really glad to have had this opportunity to be in touch with your office and I am sure that there will be many other scientific and policy questions in the future that would be profitable, certainly from my side, to discuss at greater length. After I have actually moved to New York in September this will, of course, be much more convenient.

Yours sincerely,

  
Joshua Lederberg